

THE LIGHTNING-STRUCK TOWER,

The
LIGHTNING - STRUCK
TOWER

★

By
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE LIGHTNING-STRUCK TOWER is the symbol of the sixteenth card of the Tarot pack—that most primitive book of initiation handed down by the gypsies from generation to generation. It symbolises the materialisation of the spirit, the making visible of the material universe hitherto hidden in the imagination of God. So it seemed to me it might represent the attempt which every poet makes to crystallise in his poetry the imagination of love from which all true poetry springs. The writing of a poem is the attempt to make visible the landscape and inhabitants of the world of imagination. All artists have at some time realised in profound despair the inevitable degeneration of the original idea into its ultimate material form, like sea-shells carried home from the shore by children who, having found them wet with salt water and shining in the sun with iridescent light, weep to see them spread out upon the window-sill next morning.

S.S.

For
W.J.T.
P.D.
&
H.D.S.

THE LIGHTNING-STRUCK TOWER

AYIN, the lightning-struck tower, the parapet fallen:

 Fallen are Jack and Jill:

The ivory tower is broken, the dark tower fallen:

 Broken Parnassus hill.

With heads in the clouds no longer, the gods discover

The earth they dreamed into being, their first incarnate lover.

The stars, their courses dreamed in imagined motion,

 Move in reality:

The sea, in whose storm passion's delighted vision

 Thunders aloud "I am free,"

Smashes the bay-ringing rocks till anger dying

Falls with morning to quiet as a child sleeps after crying.

Rivers, their cataracts loosed from time's imagined bonds,

 Flow into lake and stream:

The wind in the trees is loosened, the scrolled ferns fronds

 Unfold their dreamer's dream.

The lizards, the humming-bird hawk-moth, the snake-headed
 flower

Break from imagination in patterns of visible power.

Gone are the gods from Parnassus: gods now of earth:

 Gods in disguise

In the scientist, passionate searcher, who brings to birth

 What they devise:

The crystal, the atom, those dazzling forms of perfection

Shaped by idea, and the spirit's *finer* imagination.

Poets are gods: musicians, mathematicians, these
Gods for ever in exile
Seeking new forms to embody their restless divinities:
Seeking for a while
Moulds of perfection whose secret they leave us to explore
Shapes of their bright imaginations fading on the cloudy shore.

*Ayin, the lightning-struck tower, the parapet fallen:
Fallen are Jack and Jill:
The ivory tower is broken, the dark tower fallen:
Broken Parnassus hill.
With heads in the clouds no longer, the gods discover
The earth they dreamed into being, their first incarnate lover.*

ON DECIDING NOT TO GO TO PERPIGNAN

February 5, 1939

TAKE the coward's course,
Choose safety and shame,
Keep the flesh whole
And give the mind delight.
Watch the fair sunsets
And the risen moon
Riding the hills by night.

Glut all your senses,
Fill eye and ear—
See the wild mistral
Sweep across the bay;
Watch the waves roaring,
Hear them snort with joy,
Tossing the smoking spray.

Let the puissant word
Turn courage back;
Listen to reason
Persuading to retreat;
Give up the battle
•You dare not wish to win—
Welcome desired defeat.

O STRANGELY NOW THE EYE
BEHOLDS

O STRANGELY now the eye beholds
The casual candle of the sun,
For other lamps and lights outshine
The splendour of this burning one.

O softly now the ear receives
The distant echo of the sea,
For other songs and lullabies
Enchant the heart more cunningly.

O ice and flame are to the hand
No longer nerves' extremest range,
For colder springs and hotter fires
Compel the body's sensual change.

O scent of spring and taste of wine
Are ghosts of pleasures to the sense
While love's crescendo gives to life
Its ecstasy and eloquence.

AUTO-DA-FE

*Venus the watery star and cold Diana
Queen of the watery moon whose own tides draw
Earth's oceans from their beds*

Beware! . . . Women are watery planets:
that gleam you see is your reflected fire
which in their tears does shine.

They change as water under a windy sky,
or lie enchanted under a bland noon sun,
or treacherous and dark under the stars.

Yet this is constant—their own element—
this strange fluidity. You cannot say
“I have a solid handful, here she is.”

Yet plunge your hand as often and as deep
you still will find it wet.

But water can hold fire: and if she burns
then, like a bog-fire, water will not quench
but spread the fire along dark secret channels
till it has burned for miles deep underground
and all the roots are ash;
the stems blacken upwards and mighty trees,
far from the known and innocent-seeming fires
flowering in night like torches,
crash to their brilliant doom.

Nothing will put it out. The elements—
water and fire—combine in constancy
and only by burning all, burn to extinction.

You think the fires well out but suddenly
at dusk or in the morning of some ordinary day
small flames will flicker up and in an instant
the blaze will drive you off to cooler cover.

So the heart ponders and burns itself away
and all the waters of the moon-pulled earth
cannot extinguish love's auto-da-fé.

SONG

THE primrose and the celandine
Which once with heavenly radiance shone
Turn now on me dark faces all
In love's decline, in love's decline.

The young sun then in strength would shine
And draw the blossom from the bough,
But noonday light hangs darkly now
In love's decline, in love's decline.

On summer nights stars would incline
To bend their influence on my love
But night's incertitude is dark
In love's decline, in love's decline.

TIME'S CARREFOUR

"It's windy out to-day."

"It's windy and it's cold."

So we sit here
close-gathered in Time's hand.

The American soldier in the flat above
paces about thinking of Idaho,
and over him the tarts in slippered leisure
amuse themselves to make the daylight pass.

"Where do you come from?" "Where?
I'm London born." "I'm an Australian."

"My parents came from Haute Savoie."

Yet gathered here—

all halted here—we pause

we linger at Time's carrefour

before we part,

before we scatter down Time's vanishing paths.

TIME AND THE HEART

SITTING in the park
She sees
The air grow dark
And stars
Circle the trees.

Before her pass
In Time's enchanted never
Lovers of every season
Seeking in Love's endeavour
The body's reason.

Though she is old
Her heart
Out-beating Time's disaster
Still sings apart
Youth's tender aria.

HYPERION TO A SATYR

I AM your Ganymede, page, buffoon,
Your satellite and mirror-moon,
The light-reflecting stream wherein
Your changing image may be seen,
Your Echo and your Psyche true,
Your Sancho and your Palamon.

So my sweet Sun, consider well—
The sun eclipsed, the moon is dull:
The leaden echo from the voice proceeds,
And Sancho only goes where Quixote leads.

DISTANCE

LYING in bed, your loving messengers
like homing pigeons in at the window came
with the first morning sun;
and foggy flats, grey hills and dreary camps,
suburban slums, gasworks and factories,
'all streams fed by the tears of those who mourn
in homes that lie between these dual points
positioned on the fixed diameter
spanning the circle of our life and death,
all, all rolled up into a small white flock
of clouds beneath the bright wings of the doves
and distance ceased.

Strange that the realists who measure miles
should have no measure for hearts' distances
which beat together, continents apart,
and hand-in-hand give desultory hail
from darkening promontories lost in spray.

PSYCHE ON THE MOUNTAIN

Written on the summit of Helm Crag

7 o'clock—June 5, 1943

WHO greets me here?
Whose psyche strayed
In this small butterfly
Among these rocks?
It is so fragile;
Is it yours,
Beating its wings against the crag-encircling wind?

So silently it flies
I hear it not:
Only the waterfall
Roaring below,
The cry of stonechat
In the gulley
And the faint rasp of the wind on the rough-faced rock.

Each, each upon his rock
Waiting alone
In endless solitude:
Our only messenger
This wandering psyche,
This butterfly
Bearing our message to a friend or stranger.

Our only hope
To launch the butterfly
Upon the storm
And wish it landfall.
I greet your messenger,
O, is it yours?
And speed it back to you before day closes
And seals the peaks apart in fearful night.

ROSMERSHOLM

WHAT question is it lies within your lips?
What lie escapes behind your liquid eye?
What false imposture leans against your breast
And cries to break the silence you impose?

*It is one love that masks another's face;
It is false life that hides another's death;
It is my soul that cries within my breast
To break the silence that I must impose.*

Oh, who can sort out true and false or tell
The liar from the lover or dismantle
The elaborate contrivance of our hearts
To build what seems a palace of delight?

*It is the first foundation stone forebodes
Bright terraces of joy or ruin's prison;
Built on another's sorrow the tallest tower
Falters engulfed into the sea's despair.*

MY ENEMY

My thoughts more injury than my deeds would dare
And eyes dark basilisk fires would strip
That gold as honey, white as jasmine, flesh
Down from the rotten trellis of the bone:
My raging heart would beat to poisoned air
The mild serenity of those lying eyes.

But since mind's boundaries confine the thought
(Desire a deed but only in the act)
My enemy walks unhurt. It is
My own flesh fevered, and my heart distraught.

HATE SUPPRESSED

MONEY corrupts, and power and long success,
But nothing rots the heart like hate suppressed.
The smooth façade, the social attitude,
The anger we endure in solitude,
The constant practice of hypocrisy
Infect me like a deadly leprosy
And hurt the very inward soul in me
Like lies to those we love.

DRAGONFLY

THOSE unseeing eyes which register
Upon the liquid surface of their glass
The images of all who pass:

That painted head whose bright display rebukes
The pale moth whiteness of a woman's skin
Softly by lamplight seen:

Emergent from the nymph those brilliant scales
Whose peacock-breasted blue the idle eye
Surprises by its sudden brilliancy:

The *Dragonfly*, upon the leaf's dark heart,
Watching the circling stream bear life away
On long surrender to the distant sea.

For her, the watcher on those upper reaches,
Death darkens not upon that brittle body
Resting unchanged upon the darkening lily.

Only those liquid mirrors hold no more
Within the fluid circle of their dream
The drifting images upon the stream.

FISH, MOTH AND MAN'

SEEK not nor search those pools, slip-silver fish:
No gentle river reaches will uncover
But sucking whirlpools which will deep draw down
Along dark labyrinthine streams to drown
And cast to surface, and your small still corpse
White-bellied to the starlight will discover.

Seek not nor search those flames, O pollen moth:
No friendship warmth but passion's hot destroyer
To burn soft honey wing, antennæ's feather.
Ah, blind and dreaming, lost and timeless dancer,
Sway not in light's bright music, seek for lover
That flameless fire the moon that shines, no burner.

Seek not nor search his eyes: those sharp bright spears
Would find their fatal entry to the keep.
Turn swift aside, shut, fasten close those doors
That open on your undefended halls;
For he will storm the citadel and slaughter
The lingering garrison . . . then trumpets high
And gay flags flying in the sun, march on
To leave in desolation those dark walls.

SPRING DREAM

SPRING is that time when sleep and dream draw close
To life. Last night I dreamed I walked with you
Along a grassy road to a white gate.
We drifted through on the warm leaf-bright air.
The birds invisible sang: there violets grew
As large and soft as pansies, but they grew
Under the water; for a green stream flowed
Beside the path and those dark-headed flowers
Glowed under water and their shining leaves
Stirred in the current and their smoky scent
Rose faintly from the surface of that stream,
Eddying in the air like visible smoke:
Beyond this violet stream the banks reflected
A paler primrose light and in the air
Hundreds of brimstone butterflies beat their wings
Creating a wilder light.

O Spring and Dream and Vision—so entangled,
With birds and butterflies and leaves and streams,
That Life is Subterfuge and Death is Dream.

KEW GARDENS

April 1943

ON the pale waters of the Lake
The ornamental geese sail by;
The pinions of their half-raised wings
Ready for some imagined flight
They sail in Spring-resplendent pride,
And as they turn into the sun
Their harsh articulated cry
Echoes up the waterside.

Within the shadow of a tree
Float two wild mallard side by side
Till bright explosion of desire
Flings them from water into air;
Following instinct's course they mount
In ritual's seven-circled rings:
The drake pursues the wheeling duck
Implacable to strike her down.

They pass above my head and now
The duck pursues the wheeling drake
Who casts his image on the Lake;
The wind crying in their wings
Trails a long eerie call
Across the silent fluid sky:
It is as if they mated there
In the finer element of air.

They stoop obliquely to the Lake.—
Tearing the delicate surface wide
Their feet cast up bright water flakes:
Now once again they stilly float,
• Their heads erect, their wings unstirred.
The ornamental geese sail on:
Round them the silent waters shine,
Reflect the vacant evening air.

KEW GARDENS IN MARCH

I LOVE to see young girls run hand in hand •
 Across the grass,
 Their laughter shrill and silly
 Like little birds that pass
 And tumble in the air:
 Their faces pale and their pale hair
 Lit with the faint brilliance of the sun
 Which tenderly explores each opening bud
 Of almond tree and prunus
Whose pale shells drift on air's green-golden streams,
 Green-golden streams that yearly wash away
 Enchantment from the eyes of the unloved.

 I weep to see young lovers lost
 In tender dream:
 The young girl seeks her lover
By searching in his eyes and finding there
 Her imaged love—
 The boy, whose mouth in drowsy ecstasy
 Pursues in thought the outline of a kiss,
 Thinks not what lies beyond the greening thorn
What winter's ravage plucks bright feather's crown.

GARDENS OF ADONIS

IN Sussex on a sunny Sunday once
Everyone, prams and parents, carried wands
Of hazel pale with pollen-heavy catkins
Like some Spring rite, some secret festival:
The gardens of Adonis here transplanted
To another clime than Sicily where children
Carrying bowls of sprouting grass remember
Venus's lover's longed-for resurrection.

SOLDIER AND GIRL SLEEPING

On a painting by William Scott

It is late, already it is night,
But still they wait, still spin the moments out:
There is time yet and they rest
Side by side on the hard station bench:
For the train will come, will break
These two apart and bear the half away.

Parting in love is not so hard a thing
(Leaving a bright and crystal certitude
Wrapping within the pain a kernel joy)
As parting in love's echo:
For outgoing love bears on its tide
All things away and is more sure
In its finality than Death.

These two are sleeping now:
She sleeps so lightly,
Wavering on the further verge of waking,
While his stillness holds her firm
In the fixed circle of his dream;
She lies within the cavities of his being,
The bright imagination of his heart,
And through his darkened eyes sees not

The falling hand of Time,
Nor through his sleeping ears can hear
The tiger trains prowl in and out.

They sleep.

And parting has no time for them
Nor place to hurt them in.

BALLERINA INAMORATA

THE lover from his box,
Bending to his dark passion
The choreographer's score,
Reveals his own creation,
Enchants the dreaming dancer.

His eye designs the set
Where you, young ballerina,
Dance into the light;
All other friends and rivals
Your silver swan supporters.

And you upon the stage
Unfold to him in wonder
In ecstasy's *pas seul*
The knowledge of your heart
First felt within this hour.

In the long *pas de deux*
Joy trembles to discover
Its miracle of love
While the pale obeisant chorus
In satellite circles move.

On circle, pit and stall
Death's dust begins to settle
When the dancers are gone home
And the final curtain's fallen
And the lover's box is empty.

But on to-morrow's stage
Within your lover's candle
 Another dancer burns;
Though your pale wings are blackened,
Your moth enchantment over.

ON A CHILD
ASLEEP IN A TUBE SHELTER

London, March 1944

HE sleeps undreaming; all his world
Furled in its winter sheath; green leaves
And pale small buds fast folded lie
As he lies curled as if his mother's arms
Held him and tenderly kept the world away.

His eyelids draw soft shadows down
And ward away the harsh lights' glare;
His parted lips draw breath as though
Breathing grass-scented, cool, hill-country air
He tasted not this subterranean draught.

Indifferent trains roll in and out;
Indifferent crowds, who stand or stroll
Wearily up and down, who shout
Against the echoing din: yet he sleeps still,
Deep in oblivion beyond their farthest call

Whose searchlights finger stars but pass
Looking for something else; whose town
Gleeps with its eyes half-closed, its ears
Alert for war's alarms, whose troubled dreams
Stir the light surface of night's uneasy sleep.

The child is hidden underground
Yet Sleep still lovingly seeks him out
And keeps him tenderly till dawn.
Above, men listen for the roll of guns
And sighs lie on the lips of drowsy watchers.

THE ARTIST'S VISION

On a shelter picture by Henry Moore

THE artist sees the world in composition:
in colour, pattern, rhythm, line and light,
and we in Moore's tube shelter sketch are seen
as solid half-recumbent female figures,
still, statuesque, devoid of all emotion,
shining in splendour of soft magenta and green.

Majestic, superhuman; as if some God
were in the act—creating us from stone;
leaning towards life, yet only half alive,
half patient, malleable, enduring rock
No heart will drive its pulse along our veins;
no tears will gather in our vacant eyes;

No weariness has ever weighed us down
'nor hunger ached in us, nor cold has curled
its paralysing fingers round our limbs,
nor pain, nor joy, nor love have ever known,
but soulless megaliths we lie entranced
in limbo's circle, lost between the worlds.

FULL MOON

London, August 5, 1944

It is this moon which lights us here
giving the town a forest look
as though the houses were great trees,
these streets green glades leading to silent lakes
where all the stealthy creatures of the night
converge to slake their thirst; where waxen blooms
break and perfume the incandescent air:

This moon romanticising here
shines on the field, but cannot ease
the soldier's inconsolable death,
cannot again recall his irreclaimable breath;
cannot deflect the westward bearing bomb
the deathward bearing which, night's death-hawk, seeks
for someone sleeping in the moonlit town:

And this same moon shines down on you
at Windermere, lights lakes and hills,
smoothes rocks and draws far summits down
so near you could upon the highest tops
step from your leaning window and survey
this island drifting darkly on the sea.

ON PENTIRE HEAD

September 1943

For P.D.

I

ONLY the earth bears scars
that will not wear away
 for generations;
the stones of Carthage
mark Aeneas' stay,
 Dido's betrayal.

Dungeons and prisons stand
whose walls still bar
 innocent prisoners
from day's long beauty
and night's darker star,
 Diana's splendour.

The carrion flesh and bone
of ordinary men
 ruined in battle
(whose dying semen
golden pastures sicken)
 poison the fountain.

II

Westward from Pentire Head
the wide Atlantics reach
 to the Americas;

the waters finger
rock and shell-moled beach
like tender lover.

No one could guess for sure
what ships and roving sailors
lie on the sea-bed,
where darkness filches
all tone from colour,
echo from whisper.

In the abyssal seas'
monotonous cold,
spin the sea-spiders;
among the sea ferns
stilted crabs behold
man's dissolution.

Under the sloping sun
the waters tenderly spread
innocent surfaces,
at heart rejoicing
rich in earth's dead
no more returning.

III

Only the sky casts out
the tragic defeated
from its element;
bears only the living
young and exalted
victor and joyous.

There, men like dying stars
burn to extinction
 in night's dark cavern,
* like meteors falling
in expectation
 of death's delivery:

No scar reveals their fall,
no wound, no weeping
 mars the serenity
of heaven, innocent,
as child who, sleeping,
 sleeps undreaming.

PLAGA MUNDI

O PLAGA mundi—in all the world
There is one beach where time is found:
The black shale crumbles and time falls out
And lies exposed to sun and sea.
The dinosaur from ancient eyes
Watches the rout of night and day:
O plaga mundi—the world's wide shore.

O plaga mundi—of all this world
Where ammonites, vast snails in stone,
Once slowly moved and browsed upon
Huge ferns and sea-weeds. Did they stand
Great wheels and roll along the sand
Or flat upon their sides swim by?
O plaga mundi—the world's wide shore.

O plaga mundi—in all that world
We stood among those ancient rocks,
Those crumbling cliffs scaled to the sky,
Those mud rocks shelved and slabbed, those smooth
Boulders rounded by the sea,
And all time's fossils lived in us
On plaga mundi—the world's wide shore.

O plaga mundi—in all the world
No sun so bright, no sky, no sea
So still and coiled and quiet, no stones
So smooth and old—those ancient bones
Made us more fragile, lost, alone,
On plaga mundi—the world's wide shore.

DEATH IN THE DESERT

THOSE signs upon his face, love's strange stigmata,
Mark him as passion's child, no casual berry,
Not frigid duty's fruit, no sprig of habit
But flower of lovers' single union:
Their shining jewel, passion's hoarded treasure,
He lies the child of twenty generations.
For when two stars drawn to each other's sphere
Strain to their orbits, fuse in a single fire,
From their bright wreck a new star shines in space,
Brighter, more lovely.

There is a Himalayan orchis sleeps
A hundred years within its quickening root
Till on a single night desire that fountain
Thrusts through the radiant snow dark leaves of longing
From whose dark sheath springs then the darker shaft,
A shadowy tower upthrust of pure desire:
And in the stillness of the frozen air
The blossoms break;
And like a flight of wild white butterflies
Maddened by moonlight hang on the trembling stem
Through the slow passing of the winter night
And in the morning wither. Flower and stem
Shrink down into the root, itself dissolves;
Nothing is left—no sign, no vestige lingers:

Only upon the eye that once beheld
Such beauty, lies a pattern of perfection.
So he upon my heart his image leaves
Who now his fair head rests upon the sand
• ~~So~~ on fairer lying, carrion-cleansed bone,
Past Beauty's shadow and her skeleton.

PARTING

WHAT gulfs of Space, what vaults of Time
Echo between our footfalls now.
On Euclid's parallels we walked
Never to meet, yet side by side;
And talked our hearts away and lay
At starry night-time side by side.
But now on two divergent paths
We slowly fade; each image dims
Upon the eye's pale retina;
Our two divergent paths like arms
Held out for the returning lover,
But empty still for that dark figure
Returns not but retreats for ever.

THE GLASS OF LOVE IS FALLEN

THE glass of love is fallen
Where once it was set fair,
Not into storms and tempests
Not into frost and fire
But deep in the doldrums, grey and overcast.

Malign and chill the woodlands,
Damp and sour the ground,
For hate spawns in the flower
Rotten with tears, whose round
Chalice held high love's honey and sweet her golden dust.

MUSIC AND VISION

*On seeing a blinded Airman at a recital given by Schnabel
Royal Albert Hall, Friday, May 17, 1946*

MUSIC gives now the form and pattern
Which once came to him through Vision
Though yet he sees in bright confusion
Fast-fading images renewing
Their shapes in bright original splendour.

As Memory feels her way in dream,
And stumbles on the haunting landscape
In dream recurring, till that day
When suddenly looking with startled eyes
We see that lost dream-landscape blossom
With sudden brilliance of bright day
And the dreamer wakes in the land of his dream.

But he lives in this world of dreaming:
Seeks to recall the shapes of day,
To crystallise Laocoön forms
Which glide through his mind in a hurrying stream
While colour and shape dissolve and never
Rests the conclusive, immobile image.

The Music mounts its shining ladders
Up vaulted space, until a small
Terrible Inescapable track
Obliterates those trivial forms
He struggles after: fills his heart
With forms that have no visible shape;
With pure form and light which lies
Within his heart, and brings him sights
Beyond the blindness of his eyes.

BIRTHDAYS AND DEATHDAYS

WITHIN your eyes no clouded dread discloses
The secret that I fear;
Nor on your lips the taste of death embitters
Their winter-warm desire.
We keep each other's birthdays but in silence
Our deathday passes by:
Each year it comes, our deaths one year more near:
Was it to-day, perhaps, or yesterday?
Some unexciting day which unremarked
Went out at midnight?
Or will to-morrow's anniversary
Mark up another year against our score?

Born under certain stars we bear that seed
Implanted in us;
That inescapable fate which hunted down
King Oepidus to nothing.
The anatomist knows us, the psychologist
Explains our dreams.
Yet you and I, love, know we hardly guess
What thoughts the other has:
And when we look at midnight out to sea
Or watch those stars
Which roaming on the outer edge of sight
Know other suns
What differing images pattern your eyes and mine,
What differing symbols rise:

As Tess and Adam on that night looked up
And she compared
The stars to apples on a tree, some sound,
The others rotten.
And which are we? " asked Adam, Tess replied,
" A blighted one."
And knowing that true, she followed until her star
Led to that summer morning when Angel stood
And watched the black flag break above the tower
Of Winchester gaol.

Yet still we will not care nor waste our time
Guessing our day of death;
But celebrate our birthdays when they come
And celebrate continuance of our breath.

NEGATIVE ENTROPY

or

THE THIRD LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS

or

HOW IT IS WE KEEP ALIVE

WE feed on crystals, feast on minerals,
Batten upon the moon, consume the stars
And through the channels of our love drain off
The sun's heat and the whole world's energy.

The crocus and the oak, the elephant,
The long-tailed tit, the taxidermist's owl,
Our eyes, our hair, our nails, all, all the same—
Millions of indistinguishable atoms
Chaos in single numbers, order in millions.

Only the passionate indestructible pattern
Of the all-but-eternal molecule, carries the key.
Locked in its heart lies the secret
To grow from the acorn the oak,
From the corm the year's yellow crocus,
From the fertilised cell the elephant,
From the egg the tit or the owl,
From eyes our children's eyes, from hair their hair
And from our nails their same peculiar nails.

Each greedy of life resists death,
Sucks sustenance from the desert;
Devours the rock and the ruby.
Until we cool to our end
And dying provide new fires .
For love and fresh generation.

EUMENIDES

HELLISH Time cast you ashore
A couple of decades and more
 Before I came to birth;
Malignant Time kept me in hand
Until it was too late to land
 On this tormenting earth.

If Time had let us be
Contemporaneously
 Who knows what then?
Fate would have interfered
And kept each hemisphered,
 From the other's ken.

I • THOUGHT I HEARD THE SONG OF A BIRD

I THOUGHT I heard a bird
Lying in my room in the heart of the city.

And then I sensed
Pressing upon me in the denser air
The lost light of worlds gone down in ruin
Blazing upon the pictures and pale walls
The heat of generations burning there
And death's intenser cold. Despair, despair,
The energies of thought and hope and terror
Beat in the confines of the room like fever;
All, all in motion through eternity,
All, all for ever in my darkening room.

But O lying on my bed in the heart of the city,
I thought I heard the song of a living bird.

LIFE, BEETLES, BUTTERFLIES AND OTHERS

No one has been here before, we thought,
As we leaned over the pool together:
A bog-hole on top of a mountain, walled
With peat and the bleached roots of heather,
Whose water's amber and dark revealed
Nothing at all. Like a dark jewel
Burning within itself—or cast
On the desolate shores of the Baltic lying
Like a lump of golden gum which gleams
Through the long smoke of the breaking wave

On the secret surface, as we watched,
Beetles, oaring about in abandon,
Patterned the water with delicate strokes
And golden beetles, like polished seeds
Or grains of iron pyrites, which
Drawn by some invisible magnet
Shot vertically up from the depths, to drop
Idly down again, sliding down
As if on a greased invisible causeway.
Caddis worms slowly crept about
On the peat-thick floor of the pool,
Their cases of hollow stick adrift,
Moored by the insect head and legs
Which cautiously felt their way like antennæ
Afraid of a sudden touch in the dark.

(I saw two butterflies fight for existence to-day—
A red admiral fought with a tortoiseshell butterfly
In the autumn sunlight. Each wanted to live
As they fought for the last mouthful of summer's honey,
Warred up and down waving their wild antennæ,
Beating their delicate summer-reflecting wings.)

Yet year after year on top of that Yorkshire moor
Those insects live on and on.
The pool is warmed by the sun or crossed
By sudden darkening thunder clouds;
The rain soaks down the winds declaim,
Snowstorms obliterate and ice enthralls.

They live "*for ever*."

"*Our* life's too short" we mournfully cry,
"Back to Methuselah!" Yet even three hundred years
Is not enough to hope what we long to do.

Eternity rather.

And there those beetles are
Living on and on. And yet *we* die so soon
And think our loves and thought do perish
With our soft eyes and our strong hands.

THE DARK JAGUAR

LAST night we rode, my love and I,
On distant pilgrimage;
I do not know by what lost track
We came at last to that bright wood
Where springs the fount and passion of our blood:
*But savage in his cage still howls
The yet untamed dark jaguar
For the black jungle of his dream.*

Last night we sailed, my love and I,
On an uncompassed course;
Until we came to that lost isle
Whose shores are still invisible
Where grows the tree and fruit of our desire:
*But furious in his cage still screams
The angry scarlet mocking-bird
For the white sunlight of his dream.*

Last night we flew, my love and I,
Out of the universe;
The stars like round unpointed moons
Passed far behind. We came at last
To the silent valleys of unfrontiered space:
*Motionless from his cage still stares
The golden eagle. His levelled eyes
Seeking the mountains of his dream.*

SUBLUNARY LOVE

1939

I

ALL day the hyacinthine floods have surged
about the roots of the sky-striving trees
that lift their bright tops to the springtime air,
whose tender leaves from sepalled sleep emerged
add airy music to the singing bees.
Earth with new flowers, air with young birds is gay,
the violet, campion, orchid, bugle bright,
speedwell, white starwort and a myriad blades,
leaves, shoots and tendrils green as various
as brilliant bird song—flashing feathers past
of tit, finch, nuthatch, jay; and soon
the calling woodpecker and as night falls
Cuckoo, the wanderer, Cuckoo, Cuckoo calls.
Birds, bees, buds, sunshine move now to their rest.
The long spring day rolls over to the west.

II

Now pools of silence wait the coming moon:
only night's perfumes eddying spin and weave
invisible melodies among the leaves,
while passion sleeps in dreaming lily roots:
how still, how dark the petalled waters lie:
the nightingale in anguished silence leans
her heart against the thorn and sorrow's song
lies yet unsung upon her stifled tongue.

Now like the passing of a troupe of swans
comes a faint heavenly stir, shadow of light
from pinions beating white in a dark sky
and swinging splendid from earth's caverned eye,
the moon rolls slowly up the trembling sky.

III

Along the moon's green tides that drown the wood,
the moon's green waters that now fill the glade—
all earthly show all colour washed away—
drift by white bodies green and shadow pale
as scentless petals of the Christmas rose
that greener seem against the year-end's snow,
so these more white appear in moon's green light,
only their mouths glow red as mulberries,
dark smouldering jewels in their secret leaves
and strange eyes burn with dark deliberate fire
in the radiant pallor of each countenance;
Now each to each inexorably drawn
stand face to face in tension like two drops
of mercury before the invisible wall
breaks and the drop is indivisibly one;
so locked in ecstasy, so lost
in passion's dark sublunary labyrinths
they stand: then slowly spin into the dance
and faster, wilder, in swift rapture whirl
till all the trees seem reeling by in space—
no sound at all but the moon's silent laugh
rocking the earth upon its axle shaft.

IV

So every lunar festival
through the long hours of spring's enchanted dark
they follow destined paths and trace
ecstasy's constellation, passion's star;

through still summer's ominous quiet they dance,
the moon more deadly, golden, perilous grown;
white Hunter to red Harvester succeeds
and first frosts snap leaves bleeding from the trees.
Less wild, close-locked, in weariness,
they spin among the falling leaves' brown rain
thinking of summer's warm lascivious touch;
nor dare to think of spring, those first sweet nights
those trembling joys that flowering rosebright pain.

v

Patient, entranced, the sorrowing winter's trees
grieve for the spring. An old white moon
looks down and sees twin-mounded in the snow
the graves that cover and embalm in ice
the dancers' bodies linked, bound, interlocked
in cold marmoreal splendour.
The fox's footfall marks their silent graves
Whereon death's shadow carves strange architraves.

LAMENT FOR WALTER TURNER

I AM two beings now, one creature moves
All joy withdrawn, a function and a brain;
Paid acrobats,

Which through the day's work tear their idiot way
For those who will not give us time to grieve
And rock our grief;

The other, double-sensed, lives in those moments
When you, beloved, live again within me
Your instrument.

I know now what that sixth sense means, at last;
It is the sense the newly dead feel through
For a little while;

- It is the sense through which we reach the dead
In that intenser essence of delight,
Awareness doubled—

(These daffodils consume my power of sight
Their winter-trespassing beauty burns away
Despair to ashes.)

Despair to ashes—They burned your body, that sheath.
So dear familiar, so known, so long beloved,
Of you who loved

All cool delicious things: to dream of streams,
Cold springs, and fountains; who loved to see the sun
From a tree's shade.

Now, never again will birds their infinite song
Pour in your ears their visible crystal streams
Our waterfall:

Nor Hardy's thrush, nor Keats's nightingale
Will sing again for you, nor Shelley's lark:
They sing for me.

They sing for me and in their song I hear
Your voice again—your presence everywhere
In the energy of Spring.

II

Perhaps as you lay entranced you saw *La Rose*
And your brother with trays of camellias freshly picked
To sell in the town;

Your father gay long ago and a famous dandy
Conducting the Sunday concerts, playing the organ,
Off for a bathe;

Or picnics up at the end of the railway track
At the edge of the unknown Bush where the tree ferns grew
By the water pools,

Where the sun shone with a passionate bright delight
Through the thin-leaved trees, where snakes and birds and light
Made single music.

III

You looked so calm and gentle, you lay so still
As the tide flowed up the river under the bridge;
A tranquil sun

Shone winter-pale, lit up the room and burned
The anemones' richer colours into the wood
Of the polished table;

The sky and the river shone, blue, wintry, bright-
The white room like a cavern of crystal glowed
A cavern of snow,

When suddenly swooped like a swallow breasting the water
A red-sailed boat sweeping upstream on the tide
Under your window.

But your eyes were closed and the boat's bird-winged shadow
Disturbed no dream, broke off no music's joy,
Touched no bright thought.

IV

You come no more. I cannot yet believe
Death conquered you—the bright unquenchable sun,
Life's fiercest star.

You come no more. Yet everywhere traces lie
Of your physical presence only insisting still
You come no more.

V

Open the door—come in—O speak to me, speak, O beloved.—
You cannot return. . . . To Dido's lamenting *Never*
Death echoes *Never* again.

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